

# **Connect**

*supporting student participation*

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**Number 121:  
February 2000**



**"Learning about  
democracy and  
citizenship ... at  
school, was a bit  
like reading  
holiday brochures  
in prison..."**

**Derry Hannam**

English School Inspector;  
Adviser/Trainer for the Council of Europe  
in Education for Democratic Citizenship

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this  
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- DART - Discussion, Action, Representation, Thought
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- Student-Teacher Classroom Negotiation
- Youth Rights Internet Radio Station
- Student Councils: Training and Camps
- Resources: Youth as Resource Conference;  
Democratic Classrooms and Schools: Two Reviews

**& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter #16**

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# Connect

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## Connect:

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## This Issue:

**W**elcome back to another challenging year! And to make it even more challenging (let's not get too smug!), I want to pose some challenging questions about your school.

In doing so, I want to again suggest that there are many opportunities for active student participation, and that we must seek ways to build these together. Essentially, such approaches start in the classroom - in both primary and secondary schools - with opportunities for students to form learning and decision-making partnerships with teachers and fellow students. And with opportunities for them to undertake productive work. That is, active learning can contribute to real and valued outcomes - real research, real peer teaching, real presentation of information, real community building...

Such approaches are also mirrored in the governance approaches adopted in the classroom and extended to the operation of the whole school community. Students can be active partners in making decisions about all aspects of the school's operations, not just about assumed 'student issues' (what else is there?).

When we talk about 'student participation', we also are concerned about which students get the opportunity to participate. Is 'leadership' restricted to 'successful' or 'literate' or 'positive' or 'compliant' students? The most successful participatory approaches have been those which have made particular efforts to engage those students otherwise marginalised within schools - those labelled 'failures', 'truants', 'delinquent' or 'disengaged'.

And so I ask you:

- To what extent are the following aspects of the curriculum negotiated between students and teachers:
  - content?
  - teaching and learning methods?
  - assessment (individual and overall approaches)?
  - course evaluation?
- What opportunities are there for students to do real, important tasks as part of their curriculum?
- How democratic is your classroom? That of others?
- Which students get to participate actively?
- Does the school have an active student organisation?
- Is it elected yet and underway with its work?
- What sorts of things does it deal with?
- Are students represented on the school's governing bodies (School Council, Curriculum Committee etc)?
- Are students encouraged and supported to deal positively with contentious issues?

And I'd really like to hear your answers!! How does your school address these questions? What are you doing in 2000?

*Roger Holdsworth*

**NEXT ISSUE: #122 - April 2000**

**Deadline for material: end of March**

## Sherbrooke Community School, Vic

# SCRAM!

It's been over a year since the event, and we are still receiving new recognition and praise for the hard work we put into the 1998 SCRAM Competition. SCRAM stands for Schools Conflict Resolution and Mediation - which all of our team members can now quote quickly and proudly.

Mediation is a process in which two parties come together to discuss the conflicting issues, and to work towards a resolution. The competition was set up by the Law Institutes of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria to help schools and students learn the use of mediation as a problem-solving device. Previously the competition was only run in Queensland, but in 1998, the program extended to schools in other states.

So in May 1998, Sherbrooke Community School set up their team. The team consisted of seven people: Laura Williams, Miriam Spring, Rod Price, Amy Hunt, Zoë Cooper, Beren Spencer and Zeke Pottage as coach. Our teacher, Denise Dempsey, was also a vital part of our team who encouraged us to start and to continue. Some of the senior students at our school had previously completed a course in peer counselling, and the competition seemed like the next step in gaining experience to practise our skills within the school.

We began, to be honest, with no experience in mediation whatsoever. We had no high hopes and strolled into the

competition with the attitude that "we may as well give it a go". Mediation was not yet a part of our school curriculum, but after we gained experience in the area, we displayed a mediation in front of the school community to inform the students and teachers what it actually was that we were doing, and hopefully to get them interested.

The competition consisted of several rounds to complete before reaching the finals. The Law Institute would devise a problem and we would have three to four weeks to prepare the mediation. This was difficult to script, as we were given extra confidential information about our characters on the day. The team consists of two separate

roles: four students role play the opposing sides (two each), and another two students act as mediators. The mediation process is taken in steps: after brief introductions, the mediators instigate a discussion between the parties about the incidents that brought them to the mediation. Then the issues are defined and discussed. The parties must then brainstorm possible options, so that they can decide on a solution or a mutual agreement.

The mediators and the role players were judged separately. The role players were judged on the realism of their characters and of the problem displayed, and how well they worked in mediation; the mediators were judged on how well they used body language, listening, and formal language, and on their knowledge of the mediation process. After each round, we were presented with a harder problem and a higher competition.



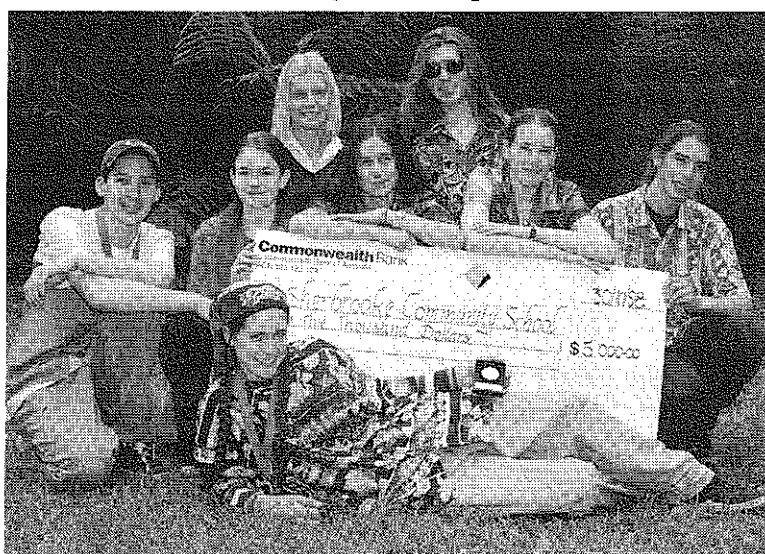
When we were told that we had passed the first round, we were rapt. We hadn't joined the competition to win; just to be part of something positive was our motivation. I personally grew very excited at this stage, and every time we passed another round said: "even if we just pass this next round, I'll be happy." Our team developed into a skilled and experienced cooperative group and were all supportive and proud of each other.

The final round in Melbourne was nerve racking, but it was our best performance, and as a result, we made it into the national finals. We were now the SCRAM champions of Victoria, and off to Brisbane to compete against South Sydney High School from NSW and Brigidine College from Queensland. But our quest was not yet over, for the cost of air fares and meals in Queensland was not covered by the Law Institutes. So, much hard work and fundraising was ahead of us. We received a lot of support and recognition from our school, families and from the community, which was much appreciated.

While sitting in the Law Institute in Queensland, waiting to go onto the stage, it finally dawned on us. My friends' faces seemed stressed and nervous; we stared at the scribbled notes on our pages, wondering: Have I forgotten the whole mediation process? Can I hold a serious conversation without cracking up? Am I supposed to bring up that issue? Is it too late to call it all off? I never regretted it though. It was the first time we had performed in front of a large audience, with video cameras and the works. And it was the hardest problem we had been faced with.

But somehow we seemed destined to win. For once, our small Community School was getting the recognition it deserved. We were rewarded for our efforts, not only with the medals and \$5000 for our school, but also with skills, experience and the achievement. And I learnt to use the word 'inaugural' in a sentence: we were the inaugural winners of the National SCRAM Grand Final.

In October 1999, we were informed of a youth support night: 'Celebrating Our Youth', in which we were asked to take part. This was set up by Youth Works and supported by the Shire of Yarra Ranges, the Department



of Human Services School Nursing Program, Eastern Region, Parent Zone and Regional Extended Family Services (REFS). We demonstrated our mediation skills through role-play. This involved putting on a play about conflict within the home. We illustrated the possible resolutions, including mediation, amongst some quite comical outcomes.

Recently, another team member and myself have used our skills by holding mediation sessions for the younger students, who are struggling with conflict and bullying within the school. We used a combination of counselling and mediation to

form a less structured and more comfortable process for the students. This has proved to be a working process with some positive and some negative outcomes. It has become apparent that, in real life, problems are not always defined as conflicting sides. One of the most important things about mediation is that it must be voluntary. If the students decide to come to mediation, they must work towards resolving the problem at hand. In a lot of schools this is not always taken into account, and when students are forced to attend, it is most likely they will not come to an agreement.

We hope to use this process more in the future, and plan to

incorporate mediation into our school's timetable to encourage teachers and students to use this form of conflict resolution more often. We would also encourage anyone to take part in the SCRAM Competition, for it does not only give you skills in mediation, but also in cooperation and team work,

confidence and patience with others.

Our team was able to view this year's Grand Final which was held in Melbourne. We would like to congratulate once again this year's Melbourne team who won second prize. Good luck also to all the students who will be taking part in the competition this year, which will commence soon.

It's been an overwhelming experience and, although it sounds clichéd, it has proved that anyone can achieve anything if you give it a go.

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# DART *Discussion, Action, Representation and Thought*

Late in 1999, the SRC at St Helena Secondary College (in Melbourne's north) took part in a program called **DART**. **DART**, which stands for **Discussion Action Representation and Thought**, is a partnership project between Banyule Youth Service and secondary school SRCs in the city of Banyule. The actual project is a series of forums run in the school, involving every student and therefore everyone's opinions.

The program is a supporting framework to facilitate the SRC to run their own forum, and allows each individual school to run the forums the way they see best. The SRC took on many weeks of work to prepare for the forums, which resulted in a great success.

St Helena's SRC decided to conduct individual year level forums. The forums were to be conducted over two periods, which meant the students wouldn't miss out on too much schoolwork and their attention span wouldn't fail.

Our first forum, for year 11, and run over two periods on the 8th of September, included six topics. These were: Smoking, the New VCE structure, Drugs, Sexual Health, Stress and Social Events. We tried to think of different topics that suited each age group and tried as hard as we could to give each student their ideal topic. We did this by surveying students and then placing them in a topic suited to their reply. This was a time-consuming task, yet a task that had to be undertaken to ensure the forum ran smoothly.

In the end there were about thirteen different groups, who all had separate classrooms to discuss their topic. Each group also had at least one and in some cases two facilitators who had previously been briefed on how to lead and prompt the group. The forum was a great success as were the others

that followed. It was a chance for the students at St Helena to have a voice in school and community issues. Previously numerous students had been sent to state forums and the like but the DART program allowed every student to voice their opinions, which was a priceless opportunity to have. Although some students weren't interested, the ones that were really got a lot out of it.

They came up with some interesting recommendations, such as:

## **Smoking**

- Deterrence posters and pictures around the school, advertising anti-smoking programs.
- Fans or air fresheners to be installed in the toilets to get rid of the smell.
- A VCE room with couches, fridge, microwave, TV, VCR and radio. This would also provide a relaxed social environment and give students a place of their own.

## **The New VCE Structure**

- An easy to understand booklet detailing the changes to the VCE structure and how they affect students should be produced for all VCE students.

The second forum at St Helena Secondary was run a couple of weeks later and involved interested year 12

students at recess and lunchtime. The reason a proper forum wasn't held was because it was a critical working time in the VCE. The turn out of this forum was very successful, especially as the majority of students are never really keen to give up their time. The organising and structure of this second forum was much easier than the first. This was because we had already had some experience at what worked best, and had a system to follow. The fact that this was a voluntary forum that still worked well was very reassuring for the forums that were to follow. We also held a year 10 forum, which we found just easy to put together now that we knew what we were doing. We have scheduled forums for the year 7s, 8s and 9s for early this year.

We did encounter problems through the DART program such as facilitator training. The facilitators were briefed before the forum, yet they really needed more information and more structure in the topic for discussion. The groups were also probably a bit large; smaller groups would have been much more effective; we found that crowd control also needed a bit of work. We also needed a little bit more time at the start of the forum to fully inform the students of what was about to take place.

Montmorency Secondary College SRC was the next to hold a DART forum. After several false starts, they got a year 7, 8 and 9 combined forum. Though the style of the forum was different from that of St Helena's SRC, and the students selected mostly different topics, the difficulties encountered were very similar. A series of

strong recommendations still resulted from the opportunity to discuss these issues.

Banksia Secondary College DART forum, a combined 9 and 10 forum, was run by their Student Action Team. The discussions resulted in lots of strong debate over topics such as school bullying and racism, sexual harassment, graffiti and sport. They came up with some interesting proposals, such as:

- An all girls sport class and sports activities.
- A graffiti wall to be provided by the council.

The findings of all these forums were sent to Banyule Youth Services to form a report. The initial action taken from the findings of each forum is that letters have been written to several different groups, such as the School Councils, the Banyule City Council, the State Minister for Education, the Australian Drug Foundation and the Teachers' Association, to name a few. The letters raise the relevant points and ask the organisation to forward a response to the ideas and recommendations. From there it is hoped students and SRCs will be able to initiate some

action to push for the recommendations they feel strongest about.

The students involved in organising the forums now find a system in place where they can run future forums much easier.

This project was the first of its kind, as no secondary school in Victoria had ever done anything similar and we found that it was very exciting, informative and an extremely successful way to hear what **every** student wanted.

**Jessica Standfield**  
1999 SRC President  
St Helena Secondary College

## Profile...

## BRETT SCOTT

*The Student Action Team (see reports in Connect 119, October 1999) at Altona Secondary College (in Melbourne's western suburbs) consists of a group of students who are investigating truancy - its causes, its consequences, and what the school can do about it. The Team is made up of students who, themselves, have direct past experience of truancy.*

*Brett Scott is the teacher liaison for the Student Action Team. He has also been SRC Coordinator in previous years. I asked Brett about what initially drove him to get involved.*

### Starting the SRC

It was a focus actually on getting kids to improve their own environment, and beyond that: giving them skills and responsibilities. And giving them a say: not letting adults run the whole show for them. Those things raise their self esteem and let them learn both that they can contribute and that they can get things done if they want.

*How about you: what do you get out of it?*

I simply enjoy the contact with the students - helping them and giving them some guidance. It's a sense of personal achievement, I suppose, but I also get a kick out of seeing them do well.

*How did you first get started?*

I started working with the SRC in 1993. We had a building - a student shelter - really a couple of relocatables joined together - a big empty space. When I was talking with a few of the students about it in 1992, they thought it was a big useless waste of space, and asked if we couldn't do something with it. At the time they didn't have an SRC established.

So we started from scratch, and got a really good group of kids on the SRC. We went out to petro-chemical companies, to a plasterboard company - to a whole range

of different people - and got sponsorship. The whole project ended up costing about \$9000 of which the school put in about \$800. Over a period of four months, on nights and weekends, the kids transformed this building, working with tradespeople (who gave up their time for free). They had a pool table in there, they painted it, they carpeted it, they designed furniture and had a furniture group make the furniture, they built benches themselves, put a stereo system in, an office, a VCE lounge. We had one of the mums re-upholster the furniture. The sense of achievement in what they had done was fantastic and they got such a buzz out of it. And they looked after it. So from then on, I thought that this was a really cool thing to do - to work with kids on that level.

*Were these the achievers in the school?*

A combination. That particular SRC was fantastic: I don't think we've had one as good since. They were combination of popular kids, really isolated kids, academics, sports people, musos. There was meant to be 24 students on the SRC, but there ended up being 36 because it was such a good thing. All the other kids wanted to jump on board.

They didn't only do that student shelter project (obviously that took a heap of time) but they did a stack of other things. And they changed their environment. In doing so they changed a bit of the culture of the school in fact; all of a sudden they had somewhere to go and something to look. The rest of the student body knew that their peers had done it for them.

*It made a lasting impact?*

Absolutely. It's still talked about - that particular group, that particular year. After that, the SRC concentrated more on issues such as rubbish around the yard, and on lobbying the School Council for a range of things.

## The Student Action Team

*The Student Action Team can be seen in a different league: a tough issue you're taking on.*

The successes we've had with that have been very pleasing, given that we've been able to get a dozen students that wag a lot back to school for a lot of that time. That was tied up with the selection of the Student Action Team itself. We picked popular students - good kids, quite bright students - but students who had wagged on occasion, some more than others. Because they're a part of the popular culture of the school, they were able to get into that in-group and influence a few people.

They were encouraged to go out and talk with others who had done a lot of wagging and find out what had happened to those people. They could see for themselves that the end result wasn't where they wanted to go. So the project has given them an insight into that. They've also been able to extend it to others and simply say: "Hey, you can wag if you like, but down the track it doesn't do a real lot for your job prospects or your self-esteem."

Next year, the plan is to look what the responses about absenteeism show and what we can do to make the school better. That's what the students are interested in. The survey's fine, the data's terrific, but now it's time for the responses about what we can do to get that small group of kids back at school all the time - or as much as we possibly can. That's what students want to do - approach the Administration Committee and everyone else next year.

*How has it changed the students?*

One student on the Team had a couple of shocking years. He was constantly away; when he was there, he didn't want to do anything anyway. But he's always been a terrific kid, and that's one of the reasons I chose him. But staying away from school was more fun than being at school. So dragging him in on this and giving him those experiences: he hasn't had a day away from school this year. He's improved to the point where getting up and talking in front of people - no way, last year. He wouldn't have even come along. There's been a huge improvement in him and his results at school: he's failed one subject this year - from a kid who failed six last year.

Interestingly enough, another one on the team, a year 11 girl, said to us all in year 10 that having fun was more important than studying but she has knuckled down and she's passed really well. She goes into year 12 next year. One of the other team members has dropped off a bit - he was one we had trouble keeping on board. Certainly his attendance at school has been good, but the amount of work he's been doing is not much. And the other one is a terrific speaker. Her academic results have always been terrific and the times she has wagged, she's been busted every single time. She was about to give it up anyway and that's why she got on board this team, because she had those experiences - they were pretty horrible - and she decided she wanted to pass it on to all the others.

## Next Issue ...

*Derry Hannam is a School Inspector in England and an adviser/trainer for the Council of Europe in 'Education for Democratic Citizenship'. In October 1999, he gave the keynote speech to an International Conference for Students on Democracy in Education - 'How Do You Do Democracy?' - organised in Copenhagen by the Danish Union of Upper Secondary School Students (GLO). This is the start of that address. The full text will be in the next issue of Connect.*

## Learning Democracy is More Than Just Learning About Democracy

Learning about democracy and citizenship when I was at school was a bit like reading holiday brochures in prison. Unless you were about to be let out or escape, it was quite frustrating and seemed pointless. Fortunately, this is no longer true of all schools, and is much less true in some countries than others. However, research in several countries tells us clearly that civics courses about politics and government that consist of no more than lectures from teachers are often experienced as very boring by students (Verba et al, 1995). I am sure that in your company, I do not need to argue that schools can and should be much more democratic places than they often are if they are to educate effectively for democracy. To be effectively educated for democracy means being able to **BE** a democratic citizen. It means, as the title of our conference says, knowing how to **DO** democracy and not just knowing about it or passing written examinations.

*Continued in Connect 122, April 2000*

*I first met David when he was in year 11 at Balwyn High School, and President of the SRC. Since then, he's been centrally involved in setting up the Eastern Region Student Council and now, while a University student, has worked as the 'Regional Assistant' for the Council. I spoke to him recently about how he got started.*

I'd been involved in the SRC all the time I'd been in High School. I had some experience in primary school with setting up a Junior School Council; it was a very small effort, but it was something. I got to High School and thought: "I've done my participation bit - that's enough!" But I got hauled into the year 7 coordinator's office when they didn't get enough nominations and the coordinator pushed me into it!

Later - the day I got elected SRC President - I sent her a bunch of flowers. Without her, I wouldn't have done anything. I'd have gone through High School hiding, which was the original plan. For the first couple of months of year 7, I thought hiding is the way to go. It felt more so much more comfortable. I'd come into a new school where I didn't know people all that well, and I was finding it hard to make heaps of friends. (That was the plan: making lots of friends.) And I really didn't want to be putting in extra effort - I had other fun things I wanted to be doing. At the time, the SRC didn't seem like something that you'd put any value into - it was 'that club' over there that you'd put a lot of effort into it, and it doesn't do anything. So why would I want to do that?

*What did getting involved in the SRC do for you?*

It was hard to see, especially at the time. I was not going to be the academic success; I was not going to be a sporting achiever; but I wasn't going to be a leader either. I was just going to 'get through', hang out with friends and do nothing stuff. But the SRC put me on a different track, which was where I was getting involved in everything. By the end of year 7, everyone in the school pretty much knew me - by sight or by name even. I could walk around saying hi to the year 12s, and the rest of the year 7s were just astonished: "She's the School Captain - you know her!?" That changed my direction a lot: suddenly I was keen to do things. I've always resented teachers that push kids into doing things, but if that coordinator hadn't, I don't know where I would have been.

I think there's something about achieving important things in there. I had wanted to be a wall-flower and not achieve anything great but by being pushed and prodded into doing something, I recognised a whole lot of potential very quickly: "That could be fixed ... we could do something there ... we could get involved here ... we could have everyone in the school behind us on this issue" and it built from there. Suddenly I was taking the lead in some pretty major projects: by year 9, writing regular entries for the newsletter (which was inconceivable for a student to do at that time); putting together bits for the school newspaper; manager of the recycling team. (This was out of the question; previously it had to be done by a teacher. Year 12s were allowed to coordinate it, but it

had to have a teacher as manager - but I just took it and ran with it). In year 10, I became the secretary of the SRC: the youngest person to hold that position. It became apparent that I **could** do these things, particularly things that people would look at and say: "You can't do that ... you're not old enough ... you're not in the right year level."

It started getting to the point very quickly where they put up a stereotype and I'd deliberately fight it. I think I'm still that way. "A year 8 can't be on School Council": well, there's my next challenge - to prove you wrong. I briefly attended School Council, but not in a voting capacity, but when I became President of the SRC, the first thing I did was to support a year 8 as a School Council rep. And they loved it - I think they're still there .. in year 10 now.

*Why is it important to have students actively involved?*

That's a point I struggled with constantly. Every few months I would ask: "Why am I bothering?" I could see the end result: the event would happen and the students would say: "That was great". And the next day they'd have forgotten who did it - and the school didn't really care. I asked myself: "Am I only working for my own kudos? What's going on here?"

But I always came back to knowing that we **have** to have an SRC. The school can manage quite well without an SRC, but there's a lot that we're teaching people in school that's not just in the classroom. Students learn more lessons from school than what they learn as part of the curriculum; part of it is to do with lessons from school life. If students are not learning proper processes by example, if the school is not consulting students, then the students will never learn, never see a need to consult. So we will end up with politicians and managers and teachers who believe in a non-consultative model. I think we can make a whole lot more of our school. I always thought that Student Council was one great way to do that: to teach students democracy and process, not by sitting down in class and doing a test or a multiple choice quiz, but by saying: work it out in practice! It has a profound effect on a lot of people.

*Why the involvement at a regional level?*

I think it started when I saw a newsletter from the United Secondary Students Union. I thought: this is a great idea. Students can start getting more of an idea about their potential. I really wanted to see students across a whole area working together. We could talk to other SRCs and find out what they'd been doing. Sometimes we were having huge problems and we didn't know where to go. If we had other SRCs to talk with, we would be able to conference a bit and work out some different solutions.

So we started looking at putting together a network of students our own way, through Student Councils. That was about the end of year 11. I wrote the idea down on a piece of paper and thought: "I won't be President next year, but I'll work behind the scenes on this project - it looks like fun." But they pushed me into being President again and certainly it made it a lot easier to do the project



that way - leading from the front! The idea started to pick up with everyone else on the SRC.

I didn't have any answers on some issues. For example, how do you get broader school attention to issues that have always been dealt with behind the Principal's door? I couldn't do that: I'd charged into his office many times and argued with him, but when I walked out, no-one knew I'd been in there or that I'd fought and that I'd lost. We wanted some more ideas there. Ideas was the main reason: a sharing of ideas and strategies, but sharing resources too. Our SRC had developed many resources, from students going out and looking for them; we thought other SRCs could really benefit from having access to documents like that. And I'd always wanted to pick up stuff from other people.

So we started by doing a little conference, and bringing some SRCs from around Victoria together. We talked about student democracy and even asked what people thought of the idea of a state-wide SRC. The



*David Mould with JSC students, Gresswell Cluster JSC Training Forum*

resounding response came: "Yes, we want to see a network; we want to see an Eastern Region forum for a start - that's where we are, let's start with that." The response was keen so we took that as a mandate to do it. It took off from there: we got several people involved straight away, formed a sort of ad hoc executive, had monthly meetings - at a different school each time.

Communication continues to be difficult. Any group that wants to make contact with students in a way that's not directly related to curriculum, is going to have a pretty hard time. You can't do it during school time; then after school time, every other group is already there wanting some time and attention. It's been very difficult to work out. We've now got this new strategy to work with the local Councils in our area; they'd offer their chambers and hold a proper forum instead of just a meeting. - a formal debate.

*It's interesting that you're not working formally through the Department of Education.*

There are two key issues with an organisation like the Department of Education running a student structure. First, the Department of Education can't formally involve private schools - which I think is a wasted opportunity. Secondly, I worry that the Department of Education would

always be the controlling body; I wouldn't like any organisation that's not a student organisation having that power of veto. Similarly, I've got a problem with a state student network being the over-riding body which gives orders, when there's a lot of small networks saying we're doing fine on our own, we don't really need a state network. I'd like to see that they could co-exist quite comfortably. If we get the networks all choosing their own policies, then everything would be a lot happier.

*What sort of vision keeps you driving along now?*

Finishing it! I think that might be another one of those stereotypes: once you leave school you never come back. But I feel bit of responsibility for supporting secondary student participation. That's where I spent a lot of time - more time than on school work, that's quite clear - so it does become altruistic in some respect. I can't lead the group ... but I can be the Regional Assistant, who goes to meetings and shuts up and only speaks when spoken to. So I've done a real role reversal: students continue to run the show and the adult - which I guess is now me - has to wait until it's his or her turn. If they say: "We're having some problems with the budget here", I can point out from my experience where I think the problem is, but the ultimate decision has to come from the students.

*Why is that important?*

If I were to try to take over a project, I would be an instant hypocrite. All along we've been saying that we'd love to have teachers here, but not taking over: students are running this forum. It's been hugely important to have student control. If the students don't control it, they don't own it; if they don't own it, they're not going to bother. I've seen it happen regularly: if the students don't feel they own it, they're not going to care about it. There's a fairly simple causality there. It's just like school work being taken up: they know they have to do it, so they're going to do it, but they're not going to do it well.

If the students can own the whole process of setting up their networks, communicating regularly (which means them doing all the work), then there are amazing benefits in what they take away - in terms of education ... experiences that are going to build a whole life for them and for a lot of other people. Secondly, I think that schools can be hugely improved by an active student life. If it is just shuffling them from class to class, more like cattle than students, then I see major problems with the whole education system. Who's going to learn under a structure in which they're there because they have to be? Truancy will increase and all sorts of things. If students can get involved and feel that they own the school, then you get a much better result - academic and social - in everything they do.

*Are you optimistic?*

Every time you start work, you think: what an amazing potential, but look at the blockers - hundreds of years of hierarchical structure, that's really difficult to break through. I'm determined, though, and that makes up for my lack of optimism.

# Making a Difference: Student Voice

The Student Voice (formerly known as the SRC) at Berwick Secondary College (Victoria) is made up of 40 students. There are up to eight leaders from each year level (including the co-opted School Captains) with the respective year level electing their student body. The leaders need to be committed and dedicated as well as having the basic skills needed to be a Student Voice leader: confidence, respect for all ideas and proposals, honesty, good communication skills, initiatives and patience. The chosen motto of the Student Voice is 'leading the way' – highlighting the importance placed on leadership.

The Berwick Secondary College Student Voice is there to provide the student body with a group of active students who voice their opinions and who will stand up for the students' rights and beliefs. The students need these leaders to put forward ideas to the appropriate people in order to get what the student body feels they need. This is accomplished by having a student leader co-opted onto all school committees such as School Council, Facilities, etc.

This team has many objectives. These objectives have already been put into action, with the leaders attending the recent Student Voice Conference at Wombat Corner, in Emerald. The conference ran for three days and involved seminars, activities, forums and a motivational speaker. The seminars and activities that took place were aimed at

developing our teamwork, public speaking, decision making and communication skills. As well as these seminars there was a No Talent Quest, Battle of the Sexes and many fun filled activities and games.



This year's Student Voice is made up of Junior (Years 7 to 9) and Senior (Years 10 to 12) sub teams. Across the two groups there are six Executives; these Executives were elected at the conference over the weekend. The Executive positions for the Senior team are two Co-Presidents (one from Year 11 and one from Year 12), Secretary and Publicity Officer. The Junior team has a Chairperson and an assistant.

The Student Voice intends to hear what the students want in their school. This might be in the form of improved facilities, activities, curriculum changes or leadership development.

Last year's SRC raised approximately \$5000 for both the school and a variety of community services. This year's Student Voice plans on doing bigger and better things and fund raising is only one area of their focus. At the conference, the

students started planning fund raising ideas as well as many other projects. Examples of the projects already under way include Battle of the Bands, Year 7 Basketball competition, organising a zebra crossing in front of the school, improvements to the canteen plaza, sponsoring a world vision child and working closely with the Community Services Panel and Team to support many organisations. These projects originate as suggestions from the rest of the student population. As Berwick Secondary College has 1800 students, these projects will benefit the students and the school as well.

Our Student Voice is keen to share ideas and work together with other schools in order to further improve our already very successful team. For more information, contact: Cathey Dragasia, our Student Voice Co-Ordinator on (03) 9707 2859.

**Claire Manson, Co-President**



# PASTA NEWSLETTER

## # 16 - February 2000

PASTA is the acronym of the Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teacher/Advisors. Founded in New South Wales, Australia, in February 1995, our Association exists to support in whatever ways possible those who work with and support programs of student participation, representation and leadership.



SEE OUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FORM IN THIS ISSUE

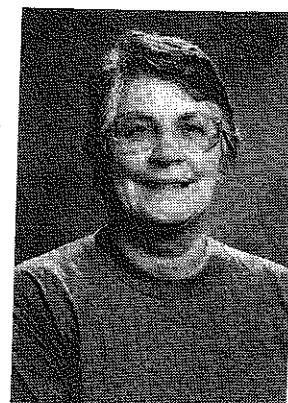
## PASS THE PASTA

Welcome to a new millennium of student representation, participation and leadership activities! The new year opens opportunities for Teacher Advisers everywhere to make a difference! 2000 is your opportunity to get involved.

For those of you who don't know me, I teach Science at Kogarah High and have for several years been coordinator for the St George District Association of Student Representative Councils. I am a founding member of PASTA and believe PASTA has an important role in promoting the work of teacher advisers and facilitating the participation of student representatives in many different forums. It is my belief that all students need all the opportunities they can get to develop leadership skills to equip them for the workplace as well as the various roles they may find in their local and wider community.

The establishment of PASTA in 1995, the subsequent development of PASTA as a National and International organisation, and its links with the National Association of Student Councils (NASC) in the USA and the Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisers (CASAA), has been due to the energy and vision of just a few people. And as we start out on a new and challenging year 2000, I would like to pay special tribute to PASTA's immediate Past President Ralph Murray. His long involvement with Student Representative Councils, his commitment to a dream with the energy and personal resources to pursue it, has ensured that the groundwork has been well done and that PASTA, in its 6th year, has the opportunity to advance the cause of SRC teacher advisers and to promote student representation, participation and leadership, transforming a onetime dream into a new reality.

PASTA's year 2000 started with a busy weekend on 8-9 January packed full of PASTA activities beginning with a reunion for participants in the PASTA USA 99 Tour. The next day had an ambitious agenda, including PASTA's fifth Annual General Meeting. Those present were reminded of the value of having a good constitution and using it. Notice was given of PASTA's intention to amend the constitution at a Special General Meeting preceding the AGM. A quorum for this meeting (two thirds of financial members) was not present so that two important agenda items - creation of the position of 'Immediate Past President' and a change of the membership year from financial year to calendar year - could not be addressed. These have been deferred to a Special General meeting to be held on Saturday 15th April, 2000. I urge all members to diarise the date so that a quorum will be present, or alternatively, if you are not able to attend, I encourage you to fill out the 'Form of Appointment of Proxy' which will be sent with the notice of meeting and must get to the secretary before the meeting date, so that someone you know has authority to vote on your behalf. However, I am pleased to report that a number larger than the ten financial Members required, was present for the AGM and included students representing four Institutional Members: Albury High - Meg Purtell, Carlingford High - Rebecca Heinrich, Gorokan High - Nicole Symonds, St George District - Aida Bunyan.



*continued page 17 ...*

<http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

# Camps - Building a Future For 2000

*From the 17th until the 19th of October 1999, Narara Valley High School's newly elected Student Representative Council attended a three day training camp at Mangrove Mountain Retreat. The general attitude towards the camp was quite sceptical as a lot of people didn't know what to expect.*

Our adviser, Sue Page, made it compulsory for everyone to go unless they had a good reason not to, but even then, some people managed to get out of it. To our ultimate surprise, after just a couple of uncomfortable hours of not knowing many people, everyone began to make new friends, not just within their year groups, but throughout the whole SRC. This was especially noticed by the only year 10 person who went overnight. It was amazing how friendly everyone was. We arrived at the camp at 10.00 am Sunday to find our rooms and settle in before beginning the program at 10.30 am. A quick game of cricket soon had everyone talking and breaking the ice.

Day one started off with activities like 'Human Bingo' and 'Do You Like Your Neighbour' to help us become better acquainted with each other. Although some of the games we played seemed corny at first, the fact that we all found ourselves laughing at the end brought us closer together. Following this, we progressed to the first three flexishops of camp, which included attributes of a good leader, meeting procedure skills and communication within and outside the group. The profile of the SRC and awareness of its activities in and around the school was a key issue that needed to be addressed, and so too, a showcase of performances was created that displayed group promotional ideas including posters and drama skits on different issues we felt needed to be publicised in the future. Many of us braved the icy waters of the swimming pool in the afternoon before dinner. In the evening we were told the warm fuzzy story and over the course of the three days we began to write each other warm fuzzies as we got to know each other better.

We woke Monday morning and awaited a busy day ahead, some again braving the icy cold pool before breakfast. The morning began with seminars and activities addressing time and stress management, problem solving, goal setting and public speaking. We then made use of the camp's leisure facilities and abseiled our way down a cliff face as well as attempting the Retreats low rope course. Both of these activities were designed to build team trust and interrelations. After a well earned lunch, we then went through our SRC constitution together and discussed any ideas or concerns we had such as the number of representatives from years

seven, eight and nine to be gender balanced. This was followed by discussions of the job descriptions of SRC executive prior to nominations and elections of the executive positions for 2000. It was a good idea to do this on the camp because we were able to get to know each member beforehand.

On Monday evening we held a talent quest for which everyone (groups or individuals) had to organise an item. There was a mixture of dancing, singing and skits followed by a disco and learning a dance called the Pony. We all ended up exhausted and laughing. This was followed by 'Tranquillity' where we all sat in a circle sharing motivational stories and expressing what we felt about the camp and what we had learned about leadership and each other.

Day three, Tuesday, began with another energiser game of Knots before a flexishop on project planning for 2000. We then broke into committee groups to start on Action Plans, to be continued when we went back to school. This was followed by a workshop on the USA trip, 2000 Leadership Conference, and an anti-discrimination activity called 'Squat'. All too quickly we were packing our bags and it was time for reflection and evaluation of the last three fantastic days. We now feel that we are no longer strangers thrown together by chance to be the SRC but a united group of close and trusted friends with a common goal of making a difference in our school.

We would like to thank our special guests Kylie Vasallo (Wyndham College), Bec Heinrich (Carlingford HS) and Nicole Symonds (Gorokan HS) who, as a result of their leadership experiences in the USA and in their own schools, ran many of the workshops and inspired us to become better leaders in our own school. We would also like to thank Mr Ken Page, Mr Ralph Murray and Mr Nic Urie who gave up their time to share their expertise with us. It was greatly appreciated by us all.

Thanks also goes to our advisers Sue Page, Kylie Trenear and Graham Eagleton who organised the camp. Without their dedication, care and planning, this leadership experience would not have been possible.

Jackson Stace (year 10)  
Kelly Sutherland (year 11)  
(on behalf of the Publicity committee)

# SRC 2000 Bulletin #9



**First International Student Representative Conference**

## **Building a Better Today**

**to be held in  
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.  
The Olympic City**

**13 - 17 December 2000**

*Supported by:*

The Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teacher Advisers  
The New South Wales Department of Education and Training  
The University of Sydney  
The University of Newcastle, Central Coast Campus  
National Association of Secondary School Principals, USA  
NSW Federation of Parents & Citizens Associations  
Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisers  
Connect Magazine (Australia)





# 1st International Student Representative Conference

## 13-17 December 2000

# PROGRAM

*"Student Representatives: Building a Better Today"*

### Preliminary Days:

Monday-Tuesday  
11-12 December 2000  
Venue: Sydney  
University

- Pre-arranged early arrivals
- Meetings as notified (eg Conference Committees, International Steering Committee)
- Presenters and Performance rehearsals
- Set-up of displays, exhibits, resource material

**contact:**

### Conference Day 1:

Wednesday, 13 December 2000  
Venue: Sydney University

#### "Celebrating Our Cultural Heritage"

- Registration, Workshop Presenters and Advisers Orientation
- Exhibits, Campus Tours, Internet Centre, International/State and Display Rooms Open
- **Official Conference Opening**
- **General Sessions:** Keynote Addresses: "Tolerance and Acceptance in an Increasingly Globally-Integrated Society"
- Interactive Discussions - The Cultural Identity of Young People
- Workshops and Roundtables - Multiculturalism, Racism and Young People
- International Buffet
- Cultural Showcase (highlighting country/state/cultural groups)

### Conference Day 2:

Thursday, 14 December 2000  
Venue: Sydney University

#### "Challenges Facing Young People in the 21st Century"

- Day Registration and Interactive Group Meeting
- Exhibits, Campus Tours, Internet Centre, International/State and Display Rooms Open
- **General Sessions:** Prepared Formal Debates (Topics open to ideas at this stage)
- Youth Challenge Workshops - Topics to be selected from the following based on submissions and resources (*let us know those of most interest*): youth suicide, unemployment, poverty, sexuality and sexual health, homelessness, violence and crime, public space, recreation and entertainment, public education, drugs, child exploitation, illiteracy, feminism, fundamentalism, sexism, ageism.
- Travel to and Tour of Sydney Olympic Site at Homebush
- Parade of Nations and States Ceremony
- Evening at Darling Harbour, Harbour and City Tours

For further information, offers of assistance, papers, workshop proposals and delegate application forms, enquiries are to be directed to:

**First International Student Representative Conference**

**1 Gladstone Street, Bathurst NSW Australia 2795**

**Phone: (02) 6332 2603 Fax: (02) 6332 2302**

**E-mail: [ckingston@interact.net.au](mailto:ckingston@interact.net.au)**

**<http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>**

**Program topics can be added according to your interests, needs and suggestions.**

# An Olympiad of Citizenship and Representation

## ***A Joint Conference for School Students, Teachers and Advisers***

### **Conference Day 3:**

*Friday, 15 December 2000  
Venue: Central Coast Campus;  
University of Newcastle*

#### **"The Environment: Preserving Our Future"**

- Travel - Sydney Harbour to Central Coast
- Visits to Old Sydney Town and Australian Reptile Park
- Meet Central Coast host schools/tours of Campus
- **General Session:**  
International Panels: Young People and the Environment  
*(Let us know those environmental issues and projects of most interest to you, and of projects involving young people who have found practical solutions to problems.)*
- Workshop and Roundtable Issues arising from the Panel  
*(Delegates are encouraged to think about how they can become involved with existing environmental campaigns or develop their own.)*
- Voting on priority issues and recommendations for Day 5 student forum
- Students Dinner with families/schools and social (dance) or rock concert on Central Coast
- Advisers Evening Program: Issues and action forum dinner

### **Conference Day 4:**

*Saturday 16 December 2000  
Venue: Sydney University*

#### **"The Media, the Political Process and You"**

- Mid-morning start: Day Registration and Interactive Group activities
- Internet Centre, International/State and Display Rooms Open
- **General Sessions:**  
Parliaments, Power and Profile: How Can These Be Made Real For Representative Young People
- Workshops: Getting Things Done and Influencing Others (active citizenship through voluntary action, starting a newspaper, conquering the air waves, setting up an SRC or similar structure, lobbying, starting an action group, how to get into and survive parliament, *Let us know those of most interest. Add your own.*)
- Preparation for Day 5 Forum
- **Special Presentation of CSC (Community Service Certificate) Awards**
- Entertainment/Refreshments
- Evening Dinner for Host Families
- Adviser Sightseeing

### **Conference Day 5:**

*Sunday, 17 December 2000  
Venue: Sydney University*

#### **"SRCs Furnishing Their Home in the Global Village"**

- Day Registration/Internet Centre, International/State Rooms Open
- Interactive Groups: Discussion of Forum process and possibilities
- Roundtable Discussions/Formation of recommendations/resolutions and brainstorming possible activities (including the launching of an International Conference Committee responsible for co-ordinating organisation of future conferences and the carrying of these international activities to Athens in 2004 and beyond.)
- **SRC 2000  
STUDENT FORUM  
("THE MAIN EVENT")**
- Action Group Sessions (Aim: to action plan each project)
- Action Group Plenaries (Action group representatives present outcome of deliberations; Delegates from other groups have chance to sign up for more than one activity.)
- Close of Conference

***Register now at:***

***[http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/src\\_2000\\_application\\_form.html](http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/src_2000_application_form.html)***

# First International Student Representative Conference

## An Olympiad of Citizenship and Representation

### What Is It?

This five-day event includes both a student and an adviser conference at the same time. It was first announced at the 1995 2nd International Principal's Conference in Sydney by then Narrabeen High and New South Wales SRC Representative, David Jones.

It aims to bring together up to 1000 student and adult representatives of school student and adult organisations. They will explore issues of relevance to youth and active citizenship within education and initiate action which will address one or more of these issues.

The successful staging of this inaugural event is to be in itself one such action, aimed at bringing into being an International SRC Committee which will be responsible for carrying forward the initiative at future Olympic venues every four years.

### Where?

The University of Sydney and the University of Newcastle, Central Coast Campus (Ourimbah).

### Who's Invited?

- Any school student representatives of school governance and leadership groups from any country.
- Any adult advisers of these and other sorts of student and youth groups within education.
- Interested people of whatever age in youth leadership, participation and - especially - representation.

### Theme of the Conference:

'Student Representatives Building a Better Today'

### Program Issues for Each Day:

(For more details see the attached Draft Program.)

- Day 1: Celebrating Our Cultural Heritage
- Day 2: Challenges Facing Young People in the 21st Century
- Day 3: The Environment: Preserving Our Future
- Day 4: The Media, Political Process and You
- Day 5: Student Representatives: Furnishing Their Home in the Global Village

### Workshops/Performances/Exhibits

These opportunities for you or your organisation to make a presentation, are at the heart of this event. It is meant to be a participatory Conference in which as many students, advisers, youth related agencies and community groups who wish to, can share their views and present their projects or explain their services.

Invitations are now open for any individual or any group who would like to be a part of the program. Subjects must relate to the Conference Theme or to the issues for each particular day of the Conference. Possible formats will be as varied as your submissions suggest and the Programming Committee can accommodate.

Businesses related to education are encouraged to be part of the Exhibit Hall.

### What Does It Cost?

Registrations: A\$500 (ca. US\$350) per representative as funded by self, school or other representative group.

### What Does Registration Include?

Host family accommodation for students. All programming, registration packets and resource materials, access to Internet Centre, meals and transport, and entry fees associated with the Conference program.

NB: Adult advisers coming for the Conference and/or accompanying student representatives need to arrange their own accommodation. On-campus accommodation and a list of recommended hotels will be available to all registered applicants outside the Sydney Metropolitan area.

For further information, offers of assistance, papers, workshop proposals and delegate application forms, enquiries are to be directed to:

**First International Student  
Representative Conference**

**1 Gladstone Street, Bathurst  
NSW Australia 2795**

**Phone: (02) 6332 2603 Fax: (02) 6332 2302**

**E-mail: [ckingston@interact.net.au](mailto:ckingston@interact.net.au)**

**<http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>**

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

by Dusty Perry

*(Dusty is currently in business in Hartselle, Alabama. However, before that she spent some time as an SRC adviser as well as being a staff member at the Lake Tahoe National Leadership Camp, Nevada. This article is one of many from a book entitled 'Leadership Lessons' produced by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, USA)*

## AIM

- To recognise that all conflict is not a competition; define lose-lose, win-lose, win-win
- To understand the different ways people deal with conflict
- To discuss and practice dealing with interpersonal conflicts in ways to achieve win-win results

## MATERIALS

- Bag of chocolate squares
- Table or desk and two chairs
- Prepared handout and/or large chart listing methods of dealing with conflict
- Handout with list of conflict situations

## TIME NEEDED

One class period

## PROCEDURE

1. Begin by playing a game called 'Kisses'. Divide the group into two teams. Have each team select one individual who will represent it in a game. Individuals representing each team should be approximately the same physical size (may be both boys, both girls, or one of each). The individuals will arm wrestle. Each time an opponent's wrist touches the table, the player wins a piece of chocolate for his team. The object is to win enough chocolate for each team member to have a piece. The players compete for approximately 30-45 seconds. Ask the group which team won. Discuss the fact that neither team won if they didn't win enough chocolate for everybody in the team. Have each of the teams meet for 1-2 minutes to come up with a new strategy to achieve its goal.

*The winning strategy is that if the two players cooperate and alternately touch their wrists to the table, both teams win. Everybody on both teams gets a piece of candy. Lesson: Students need to keep sight of the goal of the game. It was not to prove who was the strongest, but to win enough pieces of chocolate for each person on the team to get a piece. By co-operating, the teams reach a WIN-WIN solution. Everybody wins!*

2. Using the handout, discuss ways people deal with conflict:

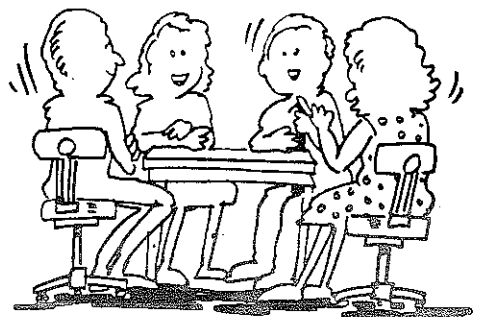
- **Avoid:** avoid the situation by staying away from person(s) it involves.
- **Confront or Compete:** fighting or pushing to win your way: Win-lose results. One party wins. The other party loses.
- **Accommodate:** person adjusts his or her behaviour specifically to avoid causing a conflict with someone.
- **Compromise:** take turns or both sides give up something.
- **Collaborative Problem Solving:** both sides work together to find a solution - a win-win situation.

Have students briefly discuss personal situations when the above methods were used.

3. Divide students into groups of 5-7 members. Give them a handout with a variety of situations described. Situations can be any that would be appropriate and interesting to your students. Have groups decide the best methods to resolve the situations: how their chosen methods could be implemented (example: how might the parties compromise?) and why they chose them.

## PROCESSING

Bring all students back to large group. Ask groups to share how they decided to resolve the different conflicts from the handout. Reinforce the idea of working towards a win-win solution. Discuss ways they can apply these ideas to everyday interactions.



Let me introduce the PASTA 2000 Team :

- **President Elect:** Jeanne Bow (Kogarah HS)
- **Vice President Secondary/Immediate Past President:** Ralph Murray (Umina HS)
- **Vice President National/International:** Charles Kingston (retired, Bathurst HS)
- **Vice President Country:** Gae (Regan) Masters (Richmond River HS, Lismore)
- **Vice President Primary:** vacant
- **Vice President Independent Schools:** vacant
- **Ordinary Member:** Sue Page (Narara Valley HS)
- **Ordinary Member:** Ellen Sheerin (Gorokan HS)
- **Ordinary Member:** Tony Gleeson (Alstonville HS, Ballina)
- **Secretary:** Bob Kijurina
- **Assistant Secretary:** Greg Arrow (Student, University of Sydney)
- **Treasurer:** Ken Page (Gorokan HS)
- **Auditor:** Stuart Hayward, Chartered Accountant (Toukley)
- **Student Committee Member:** Anna Samson (University of Sydney)
- **NSW SRC Representatives:** Kadie Martin (Kurri Kurri HS) and Rorey Redfern (Hay Memorial HS)

As we start up the new year, PASTA extends a warm welcome to our two representative on the NSW SRC/Working Party, Kadie Martin (who was present at the AGM), and Rorey Redfern.

Notice is given of two major projects for 2000. The first is the PASTA 2000 USA tour to California and Canada in June-July while the second, but most important for all of us, is the First International Student Representative Conference to be held in Sydney from 13 - 17 December. Major supporters for the Sydney conference are:

- the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET),
- The University of Sydney,
- The University of Newcastle Central Coast Campus,
- The NSW Federation of Parent and Citizens Associations,
- the National Association of Secondary School Principals, USA.

Meetings between DET and PASTA representatives in January have focused on the conference program and involvement of State school students and personnel in the conference, while a meeting planned for April 2000 will link local supporters with the USA committee. February will be an exciting month as conference planning moves into a recruiting phase. How you can be involved? See the article in this edition of *Connect* or get details from PASTA's web page:

<http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

- or you may wish to contact me directly by fax on 02 9546 4637, by email: <bowtech@ozemail.com.au>, or through the Professional Teachers Council. This is your opportunity to support student representation and leadership in 2000!

Jeanne Bow

## What I have done since I got home?

What we learnt over in America on the SRC tour is that youth matters and it is us who will eventually lead the way this century and slightly through the beginning of this millennium. But I also learnt that it isn't just us, who have yet a few years left of being called a youth and even fewer of being a student.

Before I went away I told people that the trip would have a domino effect on my community. I believe that I have started that first domino at my local and ex Primary school, Beresford Rd PS. Just a few weeks after my return home from the states, I delivered a speech to the primary school assembly about dreams and goals and how I was once one of them; that I was in their School Council and how they could achieve anything they wanted. I think that some of it went over their heads but I also think they got the main idea.

The second thing I did was after hearing that class 4W (my mum's class) was having trouble with name calling and bullying. I said that if you just reward them for being kind instead of only punishing them when they were bad. My mum invited me to try this on her class, so I did.

I borrowed an idea from NSW State SRC 98/99 and I issued them all with a pledge in the shape of a hand. The pledge was modified to suit them, so it had Mickey Mouse and Goofy on it, but the principle was the same. It was about kindness and friendship. It also explained that a pledge was simply a promise and the only thing keeping them to the promise was their word, and a reward at the end, for those who had the most stickers. You see you got a sticker each time you did something kind eg you helped a kindergarten child etc.

I gave them a speech on it and told them that I would be back in a few weeks. I returned at the end of the term and saw that almost everyone had at least one sticker. I was happy that it had worked and a lot less children had been in trouble for bullying.

It will be run again next term. I believe that kids will listen to us, as they look up to us in way, so don't look down at them. You have to help them be better humans, even if they are only 9: they are tomorrow's future.

Lana White

*(Lana is a current member of the NSW SRC and is in Year 11 at Greystanes High School. She was a delegate on the 1999 USA tour.)*



# Classroom Questionnaires: a Basis for Student Negotiation

*Presented at the Middle Years of Schooling Forum: 'Engaging Young Adolescents'  
November 14-15, 1999, Perth, Western Australia*

**Dr Steve Wilson**

*School of Lifelong Learning and Educational Change, University of Western Sydney, Nepean*

## Introduction

This paper outlines a rationale and process for using classroom questionnaires as a basis for conducting negotiations with students about their learning. It draws on an example of one secondary school classroom where this process was particularly successful. A joint paper with the teacher of this class has been published previously (Rabone & Wilson, 1997; 1998 - see **Connect** 106-107), though that paper focused less on the process of using questionnaires and more on general issues relating to classroom negotiation.

The class used for this paper was a 10X Computer Studies class. The classroom teacher was a woman of 20 years experience in the area of Home Science, and at one point in her career had been Head Teacher of a secondary school Home Economics Department before electing to teach part time. However, with the creation of the TAS (Technological and Applied Studies) key learning area in NSW such teachers were expected to teach computer studies when required, and she was inexperienced in the teaching of this subject. She found her 10X class very difficult to teach, as she related in our published paper:

10X was the biggest headache. Each lesson we would struggle with each other verbally for quite some time before any kind of teaching actually began! The students in this class did not respect 'good' learners and constantly went out of their way to disrupt the learning of a few conscientious individuals. Everything I tried appeared to fail. The students didn't seem interested or happy, and neither was I. It was a time filled with frustration and anxiety ... When I sought advice from other Computer Studies teachers they had an offhand, inward looking approach to sharing resources and expertise. So I felt very much pushed in at the deep end. I was certainly frustrated in my attempts to learn more about teaching the subject.

Because of the student attitudes to the subject and the advice I was getting from other teachers I ended up teaching them in a very traditional way. I mean a *safe* way. I used a known formula, a known approach: a textbook centred, teacher centred model. It gave me tight control (I thought) over the learning process. It was my *reaction* to classroom discipline problems. As they worsened the lessons got tighter, with little or *no* student interaction. I had observed other experienced Computer Studies teachers approach the subject in this way, and without realising it I was adopting similar practices. I suppose due to my inexperience in this teaching field and my lack of self-confidence I had fallen into the easy way out! Lesson preparation was minimal - we used the textbook!

During this period I was conducting research in her school, and had offered as part of the research to conduct classroom questionnaires as an approach to enhancing classroom-based student participation. It was because of her feelings of frustration with her 10X Computer Studies class that this teacher asked to use the questionnaire. As reported in the previous paper, she found that the understandings provided by the questionnaire provided an excellent basis for classroom negotiation with her students.

## What is Negotiation?

Boomer (in Boomer et al, 1992, p.6) considers schools to be "institutions of teaching, not of learning". He argues that if schools were institutions of learning they would put more value on students understanding why and

how they learn. He asks the question: "Are school's dedicated to the promotion of the child's power to learn, and ultimately to learn independently of instruction and guidance?" (Boomer et al, p.6) Answering his own question, he concludes that schools create dependence and passive learning rather than independence, inquiry and experimentation.

In my view, there are a number of key conditions which are associated with 'negotiation' with students in classrooms. 'Negotiation' in the classroom occurs when the ideas and opinions of students are sought by the teacher and expressed by the student; when students are encouraged to have input into decisions about what they learn and how they learn it; when these decisions are acted upon, and when students participate in exercising choice. Negotiation therefore rests upon addressing questions of power imbalance in classrooms, where teachers are prepared to encourage their students to accept and exercise power and responsibility. It rests upon notions of valuing and listening to the voices of students. It also rests upon teachers developing in students the confidence and skills to venture their views about education and learning, to participate, and to negotiate.

## Why Negotiate with Students?

Many people in life find themselves in roles where they have a responsibility for others, including a responsibility to make decisions for others. These include almost all managerial roles, professionals such as law professionals and health professionals, and educators. Underpinning these roles is a

professional training and experience brought to the role by that person which enables them to make such decisions. They also have an authority vested in their position which requires them to be accountable for the well-being of their clients. In the case of teachers, this duty of care is additionally serious because the people for whom they are responsible are not adults.

In all professions it has traditionally been common for those vested with this authority to make decisions on behalf of their 'clients' without serious attempts to bring the client into the decision making process. Professionals have often felt it their role to use their privileged knowledge to provide advice to and ultimately make decisions on behalf of clients. This has been especially true in education, where young people are perceived as lacking experience and having insufficient knowledge about education issues (about teaching, learning and curriculum) to participate in decision making about education. However, it is now accepted in discussions about ethics in law and medicine that clients should be made fully aware of their circumstances, options, and should ultimately have the right to decide. So too in education there is a growing awareness that young people need to participate in educational decisions, especially at the classroom level.

In education the need to participate goes beyond an ethical consideration of the rights of students. Educational research has clearly established that learning performance is inextricably linked to the motivation of the learner. And, as William Glasser (1990) has forcefully argued, learner motivation is achieved by learners feeling that their needs are being met through their learning. There is a strong argument therefore that talking with and listening to students about what and how they should learn (negotiating with students) is a necessary, fundamental educational tool if we are to maximise the learning of our young people.

### **Classroom Questionnaires as a Tool for Negotiation**

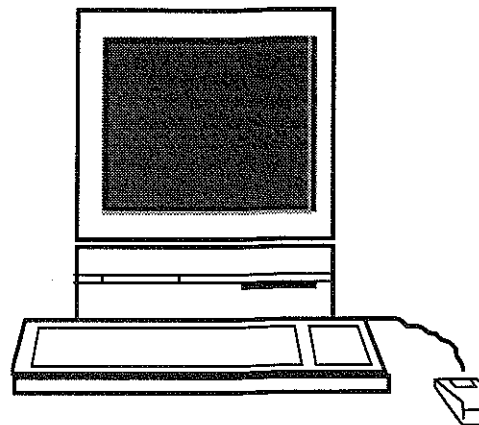
Classroom questionnaires are extremely useful as a tool for

negotiating with students. Often we try approaches with students in classrooms for the first time (cooperative learning, creative drama, whole class discussions) and they don't work. Our first inclination is to feel that students are either not interested in or capable of engaging in these activities, but usually it is just that students have little or no experience in them and we have expected too much of them too soon. It is the same with negotiating with students. If we walk into a classroom and say "I've decided that you should make some decisions about your learning. What do you want to do next?", we are likely to be met with blank stares and silence. Young people are not used to having their opinions asked for in this way, especially in classrooms, and we have to lead them to think about educational issues to be informed negotiators.

This is where the classroom questionnaire is useful. It provides the teacher and students with information about their learning environment and a basis for discussion about future directions. Through the processes outlined in this paper, the students of 10X Computer Studies went through a process of identifying key issues relating to their learning environment, thinking about their learning environment and what deciding how they wanted to improve it. They were then more capable of discussing and making decisions about broad classroom issues. When the time came to make decisions about particular learning issues (for example, about the focus of a new unit of work), they had some experience of thinking through and negotiating educational issues, and consequently valued their opportunity to participate in this way.

The classroom questionnaire used with 10X Computer Studies was an adapted version of the *Challenge Checklist*. The *Checklist*, developed by John Baird and others, (Baird, 1994), is a questionnaire for students which provides teachers with feedback relating to the classroom environment and teaching and learning issues. It asks students to

rate, on a 5 point scale, their perceptions of classroom environment, the nature and difficulty of classwork, the interest level of their work, their own work effort and participation, their relations with their classmates and their relations with their teacher. It also has a two point 'satisfaction' scale ('smiley' faces) associated with each item.



### **A Process for Using Questionnaires with Students**

The process used with the 10X class involved six stages. These were:

1. Explaining and administering the questionnaire
2. Collating the results
3. Selecting issues for investigation
4. Class investigation and presentations on questionnaire items
5. Teacher negotiations/responses on key issues
6. Building choice and negotiation into future planning.

These are each explained below.

#### *1. Explaining and administering the questionnaire*

Students should be 'partners' in the questionnaire right from the beginning, and should have it fully explained to them why they are completing the questionnaire and what will happen to the results. In the case of 10X Computer Studies, students were told by their teacher that she wanted to know how her students felt about the subject and what was happening in the classroom. They were told that the results would be brought back to the class so the students could discuss them. It was

explained why it was important that students take the questionnaire seriously and think hard about their answers. It was also reinforced that questionnaire responses should be honest if they were to present a clear picture of how students felt, and that answers should be their own, and not copied from others. They were assured of anonymity (this is a very important issue for students. If they feel their answers can be 'traced' they are likely not to be honest. An advantage of the *Checklist* is that it requires only crosses or circles to be placed on each item, and students cannot be identified through their handwriting).

Students were then given the questionnaire, and the nature of the 5 point rating scale and the two point 'satisfaction' scale was explained. Students were then separated to complete the questionnaire.

## 2. Collating the results

With only a single class it is possible, though a little time consuming, to manually collate questionnaire results and translate results into basic frequencies and percentages, which is all you need to present results to students. In the case of 10X Computing Studies I placed all results onto a basic quantitative data analysis PC program called *Statview*. This has several advantages. Firstly, if you wish, the data can be manipulated to produce basic correlations between questionnaire items. Secondly, if a number of classes in a school use the questionnaire, results from different classes can be entered onto the same data base and provide a consolidated picture within the school of student views of learning issues. The third advantage is that programs such as *Statview* can generate visual representations of questionnaire results in the form of pie graphs, scattergrams histograms or tables. This is particularly useful in presenting results to students, and when results were presented to 10X it was done using basic histograms generated by *Statview*.

## 3. Selecting issues for investigation

Following collation a decision has to be made concerning how to have the class discuss questionnaire results. With the 10X questionnaire

time was at a premium as the half yearly exams were approaching, so we decided to take some short cuts. The classroom teacher and I met and went through the results, selecting those to present to the students which we felt had the most potential to generate discussion amongst them. If there had been more time it would have been preferable to have the class review the results for each item and for them to select which results should be the focus.

Although many of the results were interesting, we ultimately selected the results of 5 items where we felt student discussions would give us the most insight into student perceptions of the learning environment and their feelings about it. These are outlined below using the histograms that were presented to students.

### Questionnaire Item 2: "How difficult was the work?"

This was selected for discussion for two reasons. Firstly, as can be seen from Figure 1 below, the majority of students nominated that their classwork was "not very difficult" or "not at all" difficult.

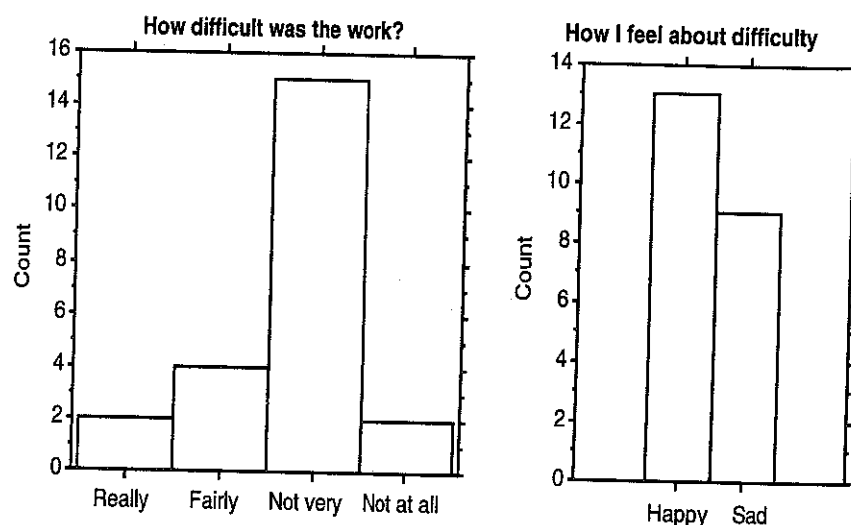


Fig. 1: How difficult was the work?

This bemused the classroom teacher because many of the students were not doing well in assessment tasks. The second issue arose from the fact that while the majority felt the work was not difficult, they were also happy about this fact (although a significant minority were not). The whole issue of work difficulty seemed worthy of further investigation.

### Questionnaire Item 3: "How important was the work for me to know?"

This item (Figure 2) was selected for discussion because it was a positive response which was in some ways at odds with other negative responses about the nature of the work. The classroom teacher wanted to find out what caused students to respond to this item in this positive way.

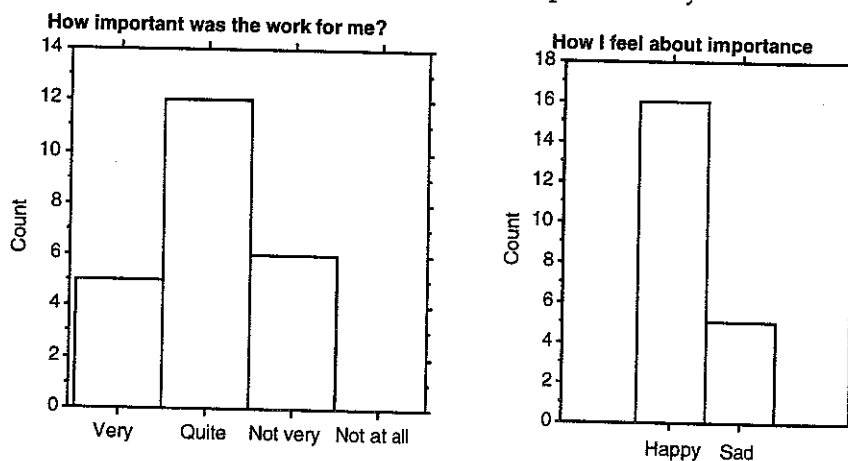
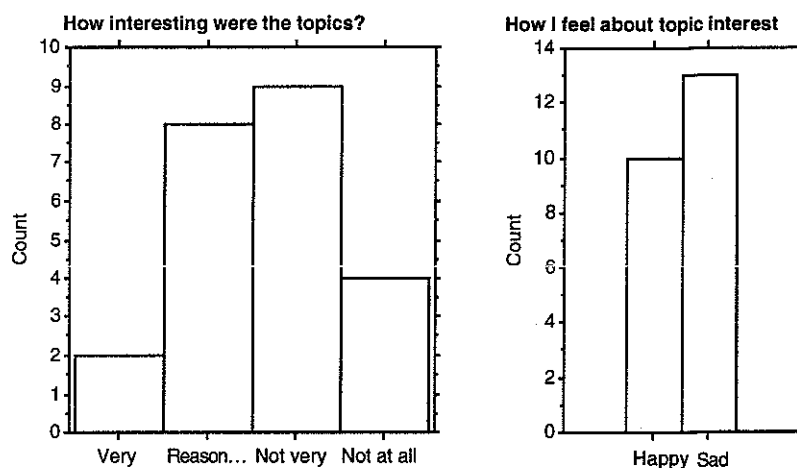


Fig. 2: How important was the work for me to know?

**Questionnaire Item 4: "How interesting were the topics that I did?"**

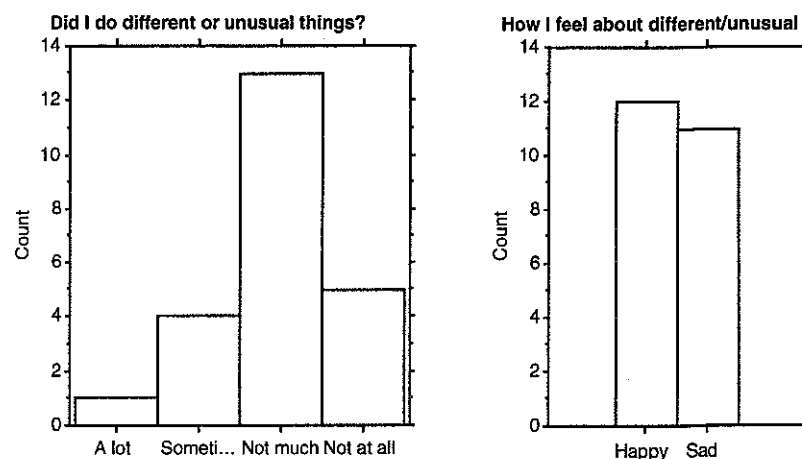
The classroom teacher felt that this was an important item. Despite responses to Item 3 suggesting that the work was important to students, the class was divided (Figure 3) about whether the topics studied were interesting. A majority felt they were not, with a majority also being unhappy about the interest level of the topics. As student interest levels are clearly linked to student motivation and performance, we felt we needed to hear students perspectives about the nature of the work.



**Fig. 3: How interesting were the topics that I did?**

**Questionnaire Item 5 "How often did I do different or unusual things in class?"**

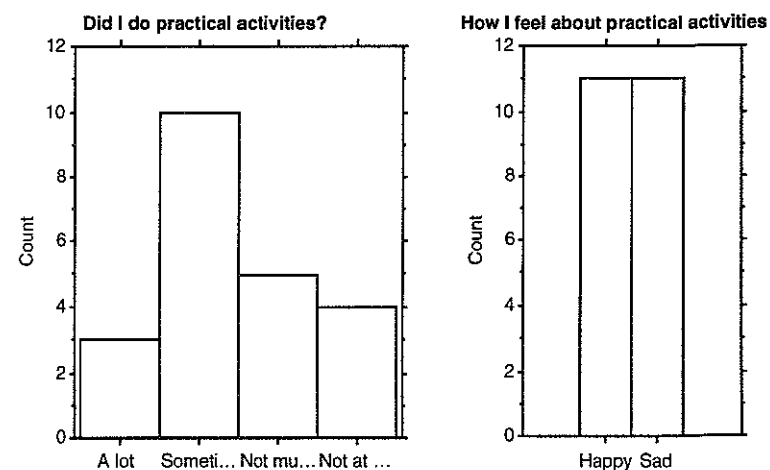
This item (Figure 4) was selected for discussion because it provided another negative response about the nature of the learning environment. It was also an interestingly complex response, in that while a majority felt that they did not "different or unusual things" very often, they were divided, through their 'happiness' or 'sadness' on whether this was a bad thing or not. These issues seemed to be worth exploring through student discussion.



**Fig. 4: How often did I do different or unusual things in class?**

**Questionnaire Item 7 "How often did I do practical activities and exercises?"**

This item (Figure 5) was included partly because of the spread of responses which tipped the overall perceptions of students slightly towards the negative, and it was seen to be useful to understand what types of activities students saw as practical or useful. Just as interesting however was the satisfaction level with the practicality of the activities, which was split down the middle. These were seen to be issues that were worthy of further exploration.



**Fig. 5: How often did I do practical activities and exercises?**

It should be noted that the teacher found these results somewhat confronting, and that is understandable. To her credit she was very genuinely interested in the results and what caused them. It must also be said that not all of the results were negative. A significant majority of students (73%) said they got on well or very well with their teacher; 82% said they got on well with other students, and 66% said the classroom

was "a good place to learn". However, there were other negative responses, including 57% of students who said they did not enjoy the work. Interestingly, students were not negative in those items that related to their own participation, the majority of them feeling they had "participated actively" and "worked well" in class. It is my view that with more time, these issues relating to

personal participation and work ethic would be very useful in deepening student understandings of classroom expectations and outcomes and would contribute to classroom negotiations. Nonetheless the five items selected above produced critical understandings which were able to transform the way learning occurred in 10X Computer Studies.

#### 4. *Class investigation and presentations on questionnaire items*

Students need to have the opportunity to discuss and elaborate questionnaire results if these results are to lead to increased student awareness of the learning environment and student commitment to improving it. With 10X one full double period (80 minutes) of Computer Studies was set aside to discuss the issues raised through the 5 selected items. Initially each of the questionnaire results was presented to the class using an overhead of the histograms relating to each item. This was simply information to give students the broad overview of results. Then, the class was divided into five small groups of 4-5 students, and each group was asked to consider two questions in relation to the item they were examining:

- i) *What do you find interesting or significant about the class response to this item?*
- ii) *Why do you think the class has answered in this way? What are the reasons or problems that have caused this answer?*

Each group spent about half an hour considering these questions, then each in turn reported back to the class on their answers. They were encouraged to address the overhead relating to their histogram, point out the interesting features of each graph, and to suggest reasons why the class may have answered in this way. After each presentation others in the class were invited to comment or ask questions. The classroom teacher made notes throughout this process.

In the case of 10X the items selected for discussion clearly overlapped, and in the course of the presentations clear themes began to emerge. Students reported that whereas in Year 9 work had seemed interesting and practical, in Year 10 it was seen to be too theoretical and book driven. Also, students resented being in the 'worst' of the school's 3 computer labs - an old, small, converted classroom. This lab contained the oldest of the school's computers which were continually breaking down, were slow, and had the least interesting software on them.

The room was small and overcrowded, and this environment seemed to contribute to their negative attitudes to the subject.

#### 5. *Teacher negotiations/responses on key issues*

It is important that, having been involved in processes of evaluating the classroom climate, students see results. A failure by the teacher to promptly address at least a few of the issues raised by students will lead them to quickly perceive the questionnaire as a 'theoretical' exercise. In such cases, student interest and commitment can be easily lost. With 10X Computer students the classroom teacher immediately tried to address up some of the identified issues, giving them opportunities to work in pairs and deciding some physical arrangements in the room. Students were asked to determine a few basic things about the classroom such as whether they would like curtains on the windows, and how they would like the furniture organised. The teacher introduced a more collaborative approach to the unit of work currently being undertaken, where students were placed in groups and given a project in which theoretical work was balanced by practical work. This division of labour meant that more students received more sustained quality time at the computers. The results were encouraging. In groups the students appeared to be more interested, settled and focused. They appeared positive about having more relevant computer time. They accepted the theoretical work better. The classroom teacher reported, over the next few weeks, feeling better about teaching the class. She observed improved student participation and tolerance, and related how issues were now continually discussed within the class as they arose. She felt the class was more positive and much less of a confrontation than it had previously been, commenting, "This has caused me to reflect, and think about learning styles, and I think we've been a bit happier - talking, and even laughing together as a class" Later the teacher negotiated

with the timetabler to re-schedule the class in a newer computer laboratory with more up to date hardware. This was a particularly popular move with the students, and demonstrated to them that their teacher was listening to their concerns. It should be noted that these changes in the learning environment were significant, and happened over a period of just a few weeks.

#### 6. *Building choice and negotiation into future planning*

The benefit of opening up issues through classroom questionnaires is, in my view, that it opens up communication channels between the teacher and her students, encourages students to have a voice, shows students they can influence the classroom climate, and ultimately encourages students to accept an active responsibility for maintaining the learning environment. However, these are fleeting opportunities, and the questionnaire is merely a tool for building longer lasting outcomes. I have administered questionnaires in other classrooms and have facilitated processes of student discussion and issues clarification, only to see the teacher do nothing afterwards, and the opportunities provided by the questionnaire have been lost. A teacher must *want* to build something from the improved communication she has with her students. There is ample research (Daugherty, 1995; Harris, 1994; Wilson, 1998a) to indicate that students are more than willing to participate if given the opportunity.

In the case of 10X the Challenge Checklist provided the teacher with an opportunity, and she took it, deciding for the next term to design a unit of work based on principles of student choice and negotiation. The new unit of work involved Graphics. She explained to the students that there were parts of the course that were 'set in concrete' and not easily negotiated. They had to do graphics, for example, and there was certain content that would be tested in the end of year exam. However the unit provided them with lots of internal choices. They could nominate to do one of 11 different projects or, if they wished, develop and negotiate an alternative within the parameters of the topic.



Some students asked could they work in pairs or small groups, and this was also negotiated. She also suggested they use a wider variety of resources for this unit than simply the textbook, encouraging them to use the Internet, video and television.

Students elected a variety of projects, some individually, others in groups. The most advanced student decided to design a video game using graphics: something the classroom teacher did not have the skills to help him with, but he appreciated being given the scope to test his talents. Other students worked in groups and designed graphics-based advertisements, games, newsletters, publications and cartoons. Outcomes of the negotiated approach were all positive. The teacher reported that students worked more independently than before. Every student submitted a project, whereas up to a third of students previously had not bothered to complete assessment tasks. Students did as well, if not better, on cross grade tests, despite the class not fixating on the textbook to cram content for tests as they had done previously. My own observation supported the teachers view of a more positive, productive class. After one visit, I recorded:

The classroom tone was remarkably different. Students were all engaged, either at the centre desks working on a crossword puzzle (theory) ... or at the computers on their tasks. There was no loudness, no belligerence. All students, except one, felt the class was better. Some were already looking forward to their projects for next term (my fieldnotes).

Students made other comments expressing satisfaction with the new tone of the class. One said, "It's better than last term. Last term we mainly copied heaps of stuff from books and answered questions. Now we have more time on the computers" (fieldnotes). Another commented, "We do much more practical things now. And more interesting. It's good being able to choose things you're interested in" (fieldnotes).

## Conclusion

Unless there is significant scaffolding provided by teachers, students are unlikely to confidently participate in classroom development processes and decision making (Wilson, 1998b). The value of tools like the classroom questionnaire is that, used effectively, they provide a way of encouraging students to clarify issues relating to the learning environment, and provide them with the foundations from which to engage in negotiation with teachers. Nonetheless these processes, and student participation in them, does not occur automatically, and to make them work teachers need to have the commitment to want to hear and draw out student views about their learning. However, the rewards are considerable.

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## Youth Rights Station Premieres on the Internet

A new youth rights radio station has launched on the internet. The Youth Rights Network (YRN) is broadcasting weeknights on the Destiny Radio Web site at <http://www.stationdirectory.com>

Just go to the page, scroll down to the political radio stations, and click on Youth Rights Network.

The site was founded by a youth rights supporter who hopes to use it to enlighten youth about the struggle for youth rights and encourage an organized, united efforts for youth rights among all youth rights organizations across America and around the world.

In addition to youth rights programming, the station also provides news and entertainment. For more information on programming, go to the station's web page at:

[http://www.geocities.com/teenvote/Youth\\_Rights\\_Network.html](http://www.geocities.com/teenvote/Youth_Rights_Network.html)

(Information from: <teenvote@yahoo.com> through the Youth Forum Online (YFO) e-mail discussion list. For more information about YFO, contact: website: <http://www.youthforum.net> or <http://www.egroups.com/group/yfo> or e-mail the group facilitator: <julian@dsf.org.au>)

# News and Reviews

## The Democratic Classroom: Theory to Inform Practice

Pearl, A and Knight, T (1999) *The Democratic Classroom: Theory to Inform Practice*, New Jersey: Hampton Press. (Local price about \$64 for the 373 page paperback, although it can be purchased more cheaply from the publisher if you are prepared to wait)

Art Pearl and Tony Knight are well known to educators in Victoria. Art has visited from Santa Cruz many times over the last 25 years to teach in schools, train teachers, speak at conferences, and participate in professional development activities. Tony has been a senior lecturer in education at LaTrobe University for a very long time. But the reputation of both authors is not so much in their longevity as in their commitment to student participation in learning and the implications of this for curriculum development, school organisation, teacher training and the sort of society we want to live in. Now they have published the first of two books that many of us have wanted, and need now more than ever.

In *The Democratic Classroom* (1999), Pearl and Knight take democratic education theory into modern classrooms, relating theory to the problem of youth alienation and giving teachers and students a framework for construction of democracy in the classroom. Pearl and Knight challenge Dewey's laboratory approach by bringing society into the school and empowering students to participate in solving problems related to their own future. The classroom becomes the site for initiating change through equal encouragement of all students. Pearl and Knight claim that society keeps evolving and changing anyway, so why should students not be involved in setting the agenda for the society which they are going to inherit?

Pearl and Knight begin with the claim that democratic education is as much concerned with the growth of individuals as it is with the advance of society. For them, the purpose of education is for students to be responsible problem-solvers and for that reason, the school should be problem-centred rather than child-centred or prescribed curriculum-

centred. As an example, they claim (p. 93) that if history were taught as unresolved conflict, students would be more likely to participate thoughtfully and critically in the affairs of their own society than they are under the current emphasis on history as knowledge which requires a leap of faith from knowledge of the past to citizen action in the present and future for the common good. Indeed, the increasing emphasis on gaining the competitive edge on one's peers at school in order to secure a place at university and/or the job market, tends towards re-definition of education as a private commodity rather than a public good - which is anti-democratic.

Pearl and Knight present a vision of a democratic society and the role of the public school in giving students not only the credentials to live in that society, but with a sense of being a stakeholder in that society. They want debate about the structure and curriculum of schooling to include student perspectives, along with as many other perspectives as possible. The quality of a democratic education is determined by the quality of the debate and the extent to which students learn to marshal evidence and build coherent cases for different positions and proposals.

They state their requirements for democratic schooling for citizenship:

1. Knowledge should be universally provided to enable all students to solve generally recognised social and personal problems;
2. Students should participate in decisions that affect their lives;
3. Clearly specified rights should be made universally available; and,
4. Equal encouragement should be given for success in all of society's legal endeavours (p 2).

The place for beginning to understand democracy, is the classroom - learning through practice.

Bob Semmens

## First National Youth as Resources Conference

2-5 April, 2000; Cairns Convention Centre, Queensland

Organised by Workplace 21, PO Box 375, Milsons Point NSW 1565  
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# DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS: LESSONS FROM THE CHALK FACE

edited by Michael W. Apple and James A. Beane

This little book is a gem: a book that gets back to the real basics. It focuses upon learning that helps young people to understand themselves and the world as they perceive it through pedagogies that also develop the self-esteem and skills required to change it.

In the first chapter the editors clarify their concept of a democratic school. Of course it is one in which all stakeholders, parents, teachers and not least students have a voice in the administrative and social decision making of the school. But it is much more than this. Central to the democratic school is the democratic curriculum. This unswervingly aims for the highest standards of intellectual rigour and evidence of the capacity to think critically. 'For students to use their minds well' in the words of Ted Sizer. But - and here is the democratic test - that which is studied is negotiated between students and teachers to reflect the realities of the students' lives, interests, concerns and those of their parents and communities. It is thus experienced by students as both meaningful and creative. It accepts as part of the reality to be understood, the need to manage the assessments and tests that constitute the gateways to higher education and employment, but the negotiated curriculum at all times has 'joined-up' meaning. This, of course, is what is conspicuously lacking for students, whether they be alienated drop-outs or 'high-attainers'...

Apple and Beane are very sensitive to the current lot of teachers... They are unequivocal in their praise for those who have the energy and the courage to resist the de-skilling and de-professionalising effects of centralised prescription in order to be creative with their students. They have nothing but contempt for policies that create the poisonous mix of fear, anxiety and depression generated in teachers and students alike by such pressures as 'naming and shaming', league tables and inspection regimes that are perceived to be unfair and punitive by design. Their notion of 'standards' is very different to mere sets of 'grades' or SATs scores which possess no intrinsic meaning. The curriculum must above all else be able to honestly answer the question 'why are we learning this?'

The editors hand over the narrative to educators who, in four different ways and circumstances, have operationalised the shared vision - all with socially disadvantaged students and communities. All with evident success, though none without struggle. Creativity and meaning-making are the key-words. The need to satisfy standard requirements are not shirked, but the route towards them is always for negotiation between students and teachers. Collaboration and individual achievement are equally prized. Parents are closely involved as are communities.

Deborah Meier writes of her time at Central Park East Secondary School in New York City before she joined the central team of Ted Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools. The coalition's principles are fully implemented at CPESS. Depth of study is preferred to superficial breadth. No teacher teaches more than 40 students. The highest standards are set - for all students - in non-tracked (unstreamed) settings. Teachers are 'coaches' and students are workers who have to ask and answer their own questions. Assessment is rigorous in 14 portfolio areas for graduation but involves peers as well as staff in reviewing the negotiated content.

Larry Rosenstock and Adra Steinberg describe the re-invention of vocational education at Rindge School of Technical Arts in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Here a program has been created that involves students in projects which address community needs. Teachers are re-empowered to make crucial professional decisions in collaboration with their students. Teachers work in teams with adequate planning time. Academic and vocational knowledge is integrated to seek solutions to real community needs and problems. Management face head-on the need for teachers to thrive in a democratic culture if such an environment is to be created for students.

The third case study is La Escuela Fratney in Milwaukee, another participative, democratic school where adults and young people work collaboratively to create a negotiated meaning-laden curriculum - this time in two languages. Parental and wider community involvement is again central to the overall democratic concept.

The last example in the book recognises the reality which confronts many teachers wanting change in institutions where most adults do not (a situation not unknown to this reviewer!). Rather than wait for a 'whole school policy', Barbara Brodhagen and a colleague decided to create a 'democratic learning community' with 55 7th-graders in an otherwise orthodox middle-school in Madison, Wisconsin. This learning community uses collaborative governance for class-management and co-operative learning. Most movingly in this inspirational story is the account of student-led parent conferences - students explaining their goals and self-evaluations to their parents in the presence of the teacher. Two quotes linger in the mind: 'We cannot believe how much we have learned...' and '...we weren't a special group but the situation made us special.'

The book has sold over a quarter of a million copies in the USA. Our need for its vision of democratic education that can truly nurture active citizens for a democratic society is no less than theirs.

**Derry Hannam**

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**Collective Notes** (COSHG, Vic) Directory Call 2000

**Curriculum Perspectives** (ACSA, ACT) Vol 19 No 4, December 1999

**Education Links** (UTS, Broadway, NSW) #59, Spring 1999

**Network News** (Network of Community Activities, Surry Hills, NSW) December 1999

**Other Ways** (AERG, Chirnside Park, Vic) Issue 82, December 1999

**Rights Now** (NCYLC, Sydney, NSW) December 1999

**STTA Newsletter** (The Shaping Tomorrow Today Association, Vic) September 1999

**Starlink** (Victoria University, Vic) Issue 38, October-November 1999

**YACSA Annual Report** (YACSA, SA) 1998-1999

**Youth Studies Australia** (ACYS, Hobart, Tas) Vol 18 No 4, December 1999

### *International:*

**Communication Research Trends** (Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture, St Louis, USA) Vol 19, Nos 1 and 2, 1999

**Democracy and Education** (IDE, Ohio University, USA) Vol 13 No 2, Fall 1999

**Education Now** (Nottingham, UK) Issue 26, Winter 1999-2000

**The Education Revolution** (AERO, New York, USA) #28, Winter 1999

**ICCVOS** (UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen, Nordicom, Göteborg, Sweden) Vol 3 Nos 2-3, 1999

**Leadership** (NASSP - Department of Student Activities, USA) Vol 28 Nos 4, 5; December 1999, January 2000

**NCACS Conference 2000** (National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA) - notice (for May 10-14, 2000)

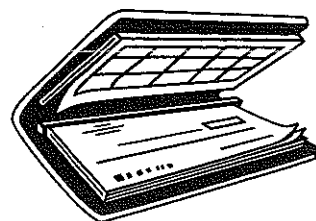
**Our Call to Serve Others and Gold File Catalog** (NASSP - Department of Student Activities, USA)

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### Code Description/Pages/Cost

- 465 Students as Researchers and the 'Why' Question** (Susan Groundwater-Smith, University of Sydney - paper at the Symposium: 'Students as Researchers: From Data Source to Significant Voice' - British Educational Research Association, September 1999) (11 pp; \$1.10)
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